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D R A

5 NOV 1964

see 3 Nov 64 memo

AD/IRL

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
THROUGH : Deputy Director (Intelligence)  
SUBJECT : The Checklist

1. This memorandum is in response to your oral instructions on Checklist distribution passed to us in DDCI's memorandum of 3 November. It contains recommendations for your action in paragraph 8.
2. Beyond the problem of distribution, your instructions raised a point which is indeed basic: the Checklist is supposed to serve the President himself and it is to the best of our knowledge not doing so. We believe that the President does usually read the semi-weekly Reviews, but we have seen no indication whatever that he is ever shown the Checklist proper <sup>EXCEPT</sup> ~~receipt~~ when he is out of Washington. Thus, we believe we <sup>first order of business is to</sup> ~~should~~ reshape the Checklist to the President's needs, ~~before attempting~~ ~~the tricky business of removing senior officials from its distribution.~~  
The present, when a new administration is being formed, seems the best possible time to try ~~this~~.
3. In our opinion, the Checklist has not served President Johnson as it did President Kennedy for three main reasons. In discussing these below, I shall suggest some of the possible ways we can do something about them.

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5. One major reason we are not reaching the President is that we have not adjusted to his working habits. The Review, which he usually reads, is produced for his evening consumption. Why not produce the Checklist for late afternoon delivery? While this is an unorthodox solution in a community which is accustomed to reading current intelligence in the morning, it would enable us to produce at the strongest point in our cycle, when our analyst force is on duty and fully on top of the day's events. On the other hand, most senior officials, yourself included, prefer to start the day with their current intelligence intake. Your morning briefing would, of course, not be affected, but we would be sacrificing some of our value to Secretary of Defense and his order to serve the President better. I would propose to eliminate the Tuesday Review and combine the Friday Review with the Friday Checklist.

6. Another major problem is lack of feedback. Under Mr. I or one of my senior staff delivered the Checklist each morning to General Clifton, who then as a normal rule went with McGeorge Bundy directly to see the President. The next morning or by telephone the next day, Clifton would be able to give us the President's reactions, both to content and to style, pass on requests for more information, and tell us what the President's immediate interests were. All this is gone. When Mr. Johnson moved in he apparently inserted his own personal staff inside Mr. Kennedy's, leaving us no direct contact with the President. We literally have no idea what happens to the Checklist after we deliver it, now usually to Irvin Smith, and those we have contact with may be two or three steps removed from any Presidential reaction. As a result we write in a vacuum.

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67. There are a number of approaches to reestablishing a feel back. The most efficient would be direct contact, having you deliver the Checklist to the President and stand by while he reads it. You might even consider (yourself) having a short appointment with the President at the end of each day. Another possibility would be to put some kind of intelligence liaison officer in the White House who would have delivery of the Checklist as one of his duties. Short of these steps, we might at least remove some of the intervening layers by dealing directly with someone like Moyers or Valente.

68. A third reason for our difficulties is psychological. We venture onto very slippery ground, but I think it worth considering whether the Checklist is at least unconsciously still considered President Kennedy's publication. The opening of the new administration in January would be a suitable occasion for coming up with a new new cover, and a new format, in other words a new publication--in all but substance--specifically designed to meet President Johnson's needs. Discontinuance of the Checklist in favor of this new effort would give us a graceful way to eliminate some of our senior readers, should you decide to do so.

69. If any of these suggestions seems to you to have any merit, I recommend you discuss them with the President when you discuss the distribution problem with him, as they are intermeshed. If we can find out what Mr. Johnson wants, we have the skills and the staff to meet his requirements.

R. J. SMITH  
Assistant Director  
Current Intelligence

RCF  
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BRIEFING NOTES

(for DCI use with President)

- I. We believe it highly desirable, if not essential, for the President to receive some form of daily intelligence briefing.
  - A. A regular quick look at incoming current intelligence enables the President to:
    1. exert his authority in a developing situation before it reaches crisis proportions,
    2. use his influence in the shaping of policy before it would normally reach him in the form of a choice between sharply defined alternatives.
  - B. When a crisis is in progress, the President can also, with a minimum expenditure of time, assure himself that he is aware of all major developments or--equally valuable--that there have been none. The key threads can be isolated for him from the mass of paper that descends upon Washington under such conditions.
  - C. The President is provided with an abbreviated menu of other developments on the international scene, and of new intelligence, which may take his interest or ultimately require his attention. From this, he can select the topics about which he wants to know more, and existing governmental machinery can provide further details for him.

D. Such a briefing would also provide an established channel for the DCI to ensure that intelligence he believes should reach the President does in fact do so. In other words, it enables the DCI to fulfill his statutory responsibilities as senior intelligence advisor to the President. Of course, in the event of major developments directly and immediately affecting the national security, the DCI is able to see the President personally, but there are any number of things of a lesser degree of importance which do not warrant such a disruption of the president's schedule but which the President ought to know.

II. The basic purpose of such a briefing is not to support the policy-making apparatus, but rather to give the President an independent look at incoming information. It gives the President an opportunity to intervene, not when the policy-maker decides to bring a matter to him for action, but when he himself chooses to do so. Also, and not its least important function, it gives the President an assurance that there are no foreign developments requiring his attention which he does not know about.

III. These seem to us to be compelling reasons for the President to receive a daily intelligence input. The form of the input, however, depends entirely on the President's taste and work habits. I have in CIA the skill and experience to meet these requirements, whatever they may be. The folder which I am about to show you represents one possible way.

A. It is divided in two parts.

1. In the first, we would give in capsule form those items which we believe the President should know from that day's intelligence. We would try to hold this to a page, but would not want to limit ourselves to that. Probably most of the time, as in this sample, we would overlap onto a second.
2. The second part consists of a series of annexes. These would include longer, but still brief, situation reports on crises, additional detail on items noted in part one but of less immediate interest, the texts of messages which we think the President might be interested in reading in full--<sup>on 5</sup>occasionally--memoranda, reports or estimates of which I feel the President should be aware.

- B. This brief is in effect a daily letter from the DCI to the President. It draws on all available intelligence, no matter how sensitive. While it would be produced by CIA, we would not neglect the wisdom or the useful analysis performed by other intelligence agencies. In other words, the brief will cover all the intelligence ground. It will, as in the sample, include appropriate maps and charts.
- C. We propose to produce this for delivery to the White House in the late afternoon, for the President's evening reading. While this is unorthodox in a community which customarily reads current intelligence in the morning, we are suggesting it as a means of giving the President an up-to-date brief at a time which is convenient for him. It also enables us to write when our full resources are normally at hand and when our senior officers are best able to bring their judgment to bear on the product. We believe that for an evening delivery, a Sunday through Friday production schedule would be most desirable, with Saturday production added in times of crisis. The brief can of course be telegraphed to the President when he is out of town.

- D. In order for such a brief to be of use to the President, he must be able to refer to it in discussions with his senior foreign policy advisors. Thus a limited number of them must also see it. We would therefore propose to distribute copies, under the most secure conditions achievable, to:
1. The Vice-President
  2. Mr. Bundy
  3. The Secretary and Under Secretary of State (with Mr. Hughes to see)
  4. The Secretary and Under Secretary of Defense
  5. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (with Gens. Goodpaster and Carroll to see)
  6. The Secretary of the Treasury (while Mr. Dillon remains?)

IV. For such an effort to serve the President well, some "feedback" to the intelligence officers who produce it, who set its style and routinely select its contents, is highly desirable. The more they know of the President's interests and preoccupations, of what he has already read and what he has already acted on, the more they can tailor the brief to fit his needs. On the one hand, they can omit what would be superfluous or repetitions.



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On the other, they can select material that would never otherwise reach him because his interest in the subject is not known out of his immediate staff. The same applies to his tastes in style and presentation. I hope some method can be worked out to provide this feedback, so that the brief can be made totally responsive to the needs of the Presidency.

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